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VMWARE, INC. DARRYL SMITH 3401 Hillview Ave. PALO ALTO, CA 94304				
EXAMINER RICK, JASON D				
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/665,808

Applicant(s)

XU ET AL.

Examiner

JASON RECEK

Art Unit

2442

Period for Reply -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 October 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11, 13, 14, 30 and 49-70 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11, 13, 14, 30, 49-70 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

This is in response to the amendment filed on October 22nd 2008.

Status of Claims

Claims 1-11, 13-14, 30 and 49-70 are pending.

Claims 1-11, 13-14, 30 and 49-70 are currently rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/22/08 has been entered.

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments with respect to the specification objection have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues that the term "computer-readable medium" is well known and can be described with reasonable clarity and precision (pg. 14) however this is not the test. 37 CFR 1.75(d) requires that the phrase

find clear support in the specification. No support could be found for this term thus it does not meet the requirements. Applicant (on pg. 13) underlines a portion of the MPEP "meaning of the terms in the claims are ascertainable" however this emphasized portion fails to include the last part which states "by reference to the description". Since the term is not contained in the description then there is no possible way the meaning of the term can be ascertained by reference to the description. Applicant's argument as to whether the term is clear is irrelevant since the claims were not rejected under 112. Finally it is submitted that the term computer-readable medium by itself (i.e. without explanation in a supporting document), can not be defined with reasonable clarity and precision. One person of ordinary skill in the art may consider the term to only include a storage medium such as a CD-ROM or a DVD. Another person of ordinary skill in the art may consider the term to mean a network cable carrying a signal. The network being the medium and the signal being read by the computer. Thus the term cannot be defined with clarity and precision on its own. Since there is no description of the term in the specification, the objection is upheld.

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to the 103(a) rejections of claims 1 and 51 have been fully considered and are persuasive. Applicant's argument that Malalingam and Vega do not disclose selecting a NIC based on VM-specific information is not persuasive since Vega teaches selecting a resource (i.e. NIC) based on VM information. Applicant's argument that there is no motivation to combine is persuasive due to the technical differences between a NIC and a processor. However a new

rejection is made in light of Carollo et al. US 2004/0267866 A1 which teaches a method for managing NICs (paragraph 37).

3. Applicant's arguments with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 67 and 69 under 103(a) have been fully considered and are persuasive. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Ishizaki et al. US 6,810,421 B1 which teaches discarding outgoing packets.

4. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 30 and 64 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. It is agreed that Macchiano does not explicitly disclose two physical NICs however Mahalingam discloses physical NICs. Since Mahalingam was already relied upon in the rejection the rejection is upheld. Furthermore the argument that Macciano does not disclose transferring based on priority is irrelevant since Vega was cited as disclosing priority.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-10, 68, 70 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mahalingam et al. US Pat. No. 6,208,616 B1 in view of Vega US Pat. No. 7,136,800 B1 and Carollo et al. US 2004/0267866 A1.

Regarding claim 1, Mahalingam discloses "obtaining access by a NIC manager to the outgoing data frame" (Fig. 9-10), "receiving, in the NIC manager, NIC management information" (col. 3 ln. 3-10), and "based on the NIC management information [...] selecting a NIC from the plurality of NICs and transferring" as a system that can perform load sharing of packets across a plurality of NICs by using NIC loads as a factor and switching between NICs if one fails (see abstract, paragraph 98, and Fig. 10).

Mahalingam does not teach receiving or using VM-specific information in the decision making process. However Vega teaches making a decision "based on [...]" the VM-specific information" by allocating resources among multiple virtual machines running on a physical computer. Vega explicitly teaches using VM-specific information (col. 3 ln. 65—col. 4 ln. 7) to manage the host computer's resources. Although Vega is directed to allocating processor time, one skilled in the art understands that a NIC is a computer resource and that similar allocation methods can be used. Carollo provides motivation to combine and teaches a method for managing NICs (paragraph 37). Based on the teachings of Carollo it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Mahalingam with the teachings of Vega for the purpose of managing NICs.

Regarding claim 2, the additional limitation, "in which the VM-specific information indicates an amount of network bandwidth that is allocated to a VM that requested the data transfer" is suggested by Vega as apportioning a percentage of resources to each virtual machine (see paragraph 9, lines 17-18), or in the alternative an absolute capacity (see paragraph 11, lines 1-2). The motivation to combine the two references was set out in the rejection of claim 1.

Regarding claim 3 the additional limitation, "decision is made not to transfer the data because transferring the data would cause the VM's allocation of network bandwidth to be exceeded" is suggested by Vega. Vega teaches that if a VM were to exceed its allocation of resources, the operation would not be allowed (see paragraph 17, lines 11-15). Motivation to combine is the same rationale as used in claim 1 rejection.

Regarding claim 4 the limitation, "in which the VM-specific information indicates the priority of the VM that requested the data transfer relative to the priorities of other virtual machines" is taught by Vega (see paragraph 11, lines 12-15) where priorities are assigned to VMs for the purpose of resource allocation. The motivation to combine these references follows the same rationale as used in claim 1 rejection.

Regarding claim 5 the limitation, "in which the NIC management information indicates which one or more of the plurality of NICs is available for the transfer of data"

is disclosed by Mahalingam. The system in Mahalingam controls which NIC to use, to do this it is inherent that a list of available NICs is kept (see Fig. 2, steps 52-66).

Motivation to combine is the same as that used in the claim 1 rejection.

Regarding claim 6, Mahalingam discloses the additional limitation "in which the NIC management information further indicates a pending data transfer load for each of the available NICs" as a system that chooses which NICs to use based on an algorithm that includes load information (see column 15, lines 30-35). Motivation to combine is the same as that used in the claim 1 rejection.

Regarding claim 7, Mahalingam discloses "in which a load distribution function, based on the NIC management information [...] is used in selecting a NIC over which to transfer the data" as a system that chooses a NIC based on an algorithm that will choose a NIC that is less loaded than another NIC (see column 15, lines 30-35). The motivation to combine Mahalingam and Vega is the same as stated in the claim 1 rejection.

Regarding claim 8, Mahalingam discloses "the ... data transfer requests are routed over the second NIC if the first NIC is not available" as a system having a primary and secondary NIC where traffic is directed to the primary NIC until it fails and thereafter traffic is directed to the remaining NIC (col. 5 ln. 40-52), and "the ... data

transfer requests are routed over the first NIC if the second NIC is not available" as analyzing all NICs for failure and routing data accordingly (col. 5 ln. 58-62, Fig. 2).

Mahalingam does not explicitly disclose "a first VM's data transfer" however as discussed in claim 1, Vega teaches allocating resources among virtual machines (col. 3 ln. 35-40).

Although Mahalingam and Vega do not explicitly disclose, "in which a first VM's data transfer requests are substantially always routed over a first NIC as long as the first NIC is available, and a second VM's data transfer requests are substantially always routed over a second NIC as long as the second NIC is available" this concept is well known in the art (see response to arguments) and yields predictable results. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to associate a virtual machine with a NIC and use that NIC to transfer data to and from that virtual machine.

Regarding claim 9, Mahalingam and Vega do not disclose "in which the first VM's data transfer requests are distinguished from the second VM's data transfer requests by reference to a source physical address contained in a header of each data transfer request", however Carollo teaches this as a system that connects virtual machines to a tangible network. Carollo describes a system where a VM can send and receive data specific to it, thus the data transfer request inherently must include an address to receive a response, this address allows one to distinguish between different VMs (see abstract and paragraph 4). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art

at the time the invention was made to combine Carollo because a return address to distinguish the sender is a necessity for any type of two-way communication.

Regarding claim 10, Mahalingam discloses "in which the management information indicates whether a failover is occurring on one of the NICs" as a system that detects NIC failures and determines which NIC to use based on this information (see column 4, lines 30-40). The motivation to combine Mahalingam and Vega is stated above.

Regarding claim 68, Mahalingam discloses a "NIC manager" that has access to data besides the VM data as managing a NIC that is connected to a protocol stack, thus all data will be sent through it (col. 2 ln. 45-52).

Regarding claim 70 it corresponds to claim 68 and thus is rejected for similar reasons.

3. Claims 67 and 69 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mahalingam, Vega and Carollo as applied to claims 1 and 51 above, and further in view of Ishizaki et al. US 6,810,421 B1.

Regarding claim 67, Mahalingam, Vega and Carollo do not explicitly disclose "discarding the outgoing data frame" however this is taught by Ishizaki as discarding an

outgoing packet (col. 8 ln. 42-50). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Mahalingam with the discard feature taught by Ishizaki. Ishizaki suggests that discarding packets can reduce administration overhead (col. 2 ln. 5-63).

Regarding claim 69, it corresponds to claim 67 and thus is rejected for similar reasons.

4. Claims 11, and 13-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mahalingam in view of Vega and Carollo and further in view of Rietschote et al. U.S. Pat. No. 7,203,944 B1.

Regarding claim 11, Mahalingam and Vega do not disclose, "in which the VM that has requested the data transfer is temporarily suspended if a failover is occurring on one of the NICs". However Rietschote does teach suspending a virtual machine to balance load (see col. 1 lines 8-10 and col. 7 lines 4-5). The motivation to combine is load balancing which is apparent from the title of the invention. Thus it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to suspend the VM when a NIC was failing, this is simply a way of load balancing.

Regarding claim 13, Rietschote discloses "if a decision is made not to transfer the data, a further decision is made whether to suspend the VM that requested the data

transfer” as a system that suspends VMs to balance the load. In the present invention it is assumed that when a decision is made not to transfer this is because the VM is exceeding its share of resources, thus an act of load balancing needs to occur. Rietschote teaches suspending the VM as a way of load balancing (see paragraph 24).

Regarding claim 14, Rietschote discloses, “a further decision is made whether to migrate the VM that requested the data transfer to another computer system” as a system for performing load balancing by migrating VMs from one computer system to another (see paragraph 21). The motivation for combining Rietschote is similar to the motivation set out in the claim 11 rejection.

5. Claim 30 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Macchiano U.S. Pat. 7,111,303 B2 in view of Vega U.S. 7,136,800 B1 and in further view of Mahalingam et al. U.S. Pat. 6,208,616 B1.

Regarding claim 30, Macchiano discloses, “a method for responding to requests to transfer data from a virtual computer system and to a physical computer network” as a way for users on a virtual machine to communicate using Internet Protocol (see column 3, lines 50-52). Macchiano further discloses, “the virtual computer system comprising a first VM and a second VM” as a virtual machine operating system having a first and second user portion (see column 3, lines 53-54, Fig. 1 components 12, 14; col. 4 lines 50-54). Macchiano also discloses, “the virtual computer system also comprising

a first physical network interface card (NIC) and a second physical NIC for connecting to the computer network” as describing each user portion having a virtual NIC and the computer system may also contain multiple physical NICs (see col. 3 lines 56-58 and Fig. 1 comp. 42, 44; col. 5 lines 4-6).

Macchiano further discloses, “for each data transfer request: determining which VM within the virtual computer system is involved in the requested data transfer; and if the first VM is involved in the requested data transfer, transferring the data over the first NIC” as a way of communication in which a base portion maintains a table of IP addresses by which the device driver addresses its respective NIC (determining which VM is involved in transfer), and where the IP datagram from the first user portion is passed to the first NIC (see column 3, lines 60-66).

Macchiano does not explicitly disclose “determining that the first VM has a higher priority than the second VM” however this is taught by Vega as assigning a proportional share (priority) to a virtual machine (col. 3 ln. 39-41). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Macchiano with the priority factor taught by Vega for the purpose of allocating resources. Using priority to give preferential treatment to an application or process is well known in the art and yields predictable results (as evidenced by Vega).

Macchiano does not explicitly disclose “determining that the second NIC is not available for transferring data” or “in response to determining that the second NIC is not available, discarding the data” however this is taught by Mahalingam et al. as detecting failure of a NIC (col. 5 ln. 44-48, Fig. 2) and discarding data related to a secondary NIC

(col. 15 ln. 12-18). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Macchiano with the error checking taught by Mahalingam for the purpose of transferring data. Error checking is well known in the art and yields predictable results (as evidenced by Mahalingam).

Regarding claims 49-66, Applicant states these are substantively comparable to the original claims, as amended. (pg. 13). Therefore, they are rejected for the same reasons.

Specifically, claims 49-50 correspond to claims 13-14. Claims 51-63 correspond to claims 1-11 and 13-14.

Regarding claims 64-66, Applicant states these are substantively comparable to the original claims, as amended. (pg. 13). Therefore, they are rejected for the same reasons. Claims 64-66 correspond to claims 30 and 13-14.

Conclusion

6. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Wing et al. US 2004/0172574 A1 discloses a method of managing multiple virtual machines.

Tanaka et al. US. 5,553,291 discloses sharing a resource among a plurality of virtual machines.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to JASON RECEK whose telephone number is (571)270-1975. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon - Thurs 8:30am-5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Andrew Caldwell can be reached on (571) 272-3868. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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